

**In the claims:**

1. (original) A boot-band comprising a band body that is wound like a ring around a member to be clamped, and that has an outer-layer portion and an inner-layer portion, respectively, at its two ends, with the outer-layer portion being overlaid over the inner-layer portion,

engagement holes that are formed in the outer-layer portion,

engagement pawls that are formed on, and that protrude outwardly from, the inner-layer portion and that are to be engaged with their corresponding aforementioned engagement holes so that the band body is held in a fastened state,

a first boot-band pawl that is formed on the outer-layer portion nearer to the longitudinally outer end of the band body than are the engagement holes are,

a second boot-band pawl that is formed on the inner-layer portion and that is to be engaged with the first boot-band, and

a pressure-reduction means that is formed in the outer-layer portion in such a manner that said pressure-reduction means reduces the pressure applied on the engagement pawls of the inner-layer portion when the outer-layer portion climbs over the engagement pawls just before the first and the second boot-band pawls are engaged.

2. (currently amended) A boot-band as described in [[Claim]] claim 1, wherein said pressure-reduction means has a structure such that the outer-layer portion rises up from the inner-layer portion when the outer-layer portion climbs over the engagement pawls.

3. (currently amended) A boot-band as described in claim 1 ~~Claim 1 or 2~~, wherein said load-reduction means is structured such that an engagement-hole formation area, which is formed within the outer-layer portion and which contains the engagement holes, is separated - by cut lines along the longitudinal sides of said engagement-hole formation area - from the remaining, surrounding area of the outer-layer portion.

4. (currently amended) A boot-band as described in claim 1 ~~Claim 1 or 2~~, wherein said load-reduction means is structured such that an engagement-hole formation area, which is formed within the outer-layer portion and which contains the engagement holes, is separated, by cut lines along the longitudinal sides of said engagement-hole formation area, from the remaining, surrounding area of said outer-layer portion, and whereby said engagement-hole formation area is elastically flexed toward the inner-layer portion.

5. (currently amended) A boot-band as described in claim 1 ~~Claim 1 or 2~~, wherein said load-reduction means is structured such that an engagement-hole formation area, which is formed within the outer-layer portion and which contains the engagement holes, is separated, by cut lines along the longitudinal sides of engagement-hole formation area, from the remaining, surrounding area of the outer-layer portion, whereby said engagement-hole formation area further has a recoverable elastic sub-area that is connected with the remaining, surrounding area of the outer-layer portion.

6. (currently amended) A boot-band as described in claim 1 ~~Claim 1 or 2~~, wherein said pressure-reduction means are slits that are formed longitudinally in the outer-layer portion in such a manner that parts of the outer-layer portion are elastically raised on both sides of the slits by the engagement pawls that are being climbed over.